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## CURIOUS RELICS OF ENGLISH FUNERALS.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY is scarcely the place where one would go to study folk-lore, or to see an exhibition of wax figures, yet within the sacred walls of that mighty and venerable pile may to-day be seen a collection of waxen effigies far exceeding in interest the choicest treasures of Madame Tussaud's, memorials of a funeral custom formerly observed in England. For centuries, when one of the great ones of the earth died, "they bore him bare-faced on his bier," clothed in robes of state, so that all might see and recognize in the motionless form thus carried to the tomb the one whom they had honored in life. This custom prevailed in England until the fourteenth century, and up to the time of Edward I. the English sovereigns were in this way borne to their last resting-place. With the funeral of that prince (1307), however, began a new practice, that of carrying on the same bier an effigy of the dead man, made of wood and clothed in royal robes. This custom had its prototype, if not its origin, in Rome, where a distinguishing mark of a Roman noble, and one most highly prized by him, was the right to have his life-sized effigy carried at his funeral. After the death of Henry V. the effigies alone were carried in state, and were made as lifelike as possible; leather took the place of wood, and later wax was used as a material more capable of being modelled into a perfect likeness. These "lively effigies," the features often copied from a death-mask, were dressed in garments formerly worn by the deceased, and were carried before him to the grave. After the funeral the effigy was set up in the church under a "herse," a wooden platform with black hangings often elaborately decorated. This temporary monument remained for at least a month above the grave; in the case of a sovereign, much longer; the lifelike waxen effigy affording a ghastly reminder of the one who lay beneath. King Henry VII. died in 1509, and an early account of his funeral states that "It (his body) was conveyed into a chair covered with black cloth of gold, drawn by seven great coursers covered with black velvet, garnished with escocheons of fine gold, with his *effigies* over it, apparrelled in his parliament robes, with the crown on the head, and the sceptre and ball in the hand, laid on cushions of gold and environed with banners of arms of all his dominions, titles, and genealogies. The next day it was brought to the Abbey of Westminster and set under a most curious herse full of lights, the representation lying upon the coffin on a pall of gold." Queen Anne was the last English sovereign borne in effigy to the tomb; for some years after her death the practice was continued by a few families of the nobility,

but about 1740 the last herse and effigy were carried into Westminster Abbey. Towards the close of the last century the earlier of the effigies, some still over the graves where they had originally been placed, some in dark corners and unused vaults of the Abbey, were collected into one place and the public were allowed to see the "Ragged Regiment," as Walpole calls them. A writer of that day tells us they were "sadly mangled, some with their faces broke, and most stripped of their robes." These mutilated remains are still preserved but are not shown; no record of the names has been kept, and there is no way in which they can be identified. At that time the more recent and better preserved wax figures were kept in "handsome wainscot presses" in Henry VII.'s Chapel, and are the subject of a curious little illustrated book published in 1793, by John Roberts, entitled "A View of the Wax Figures in Henry VII.'s Chapel." He speaks enthusiastically of the figures being "as beautiful as possible (except some of them being a little disfigured by dust), and they serve to give a striking idea of the persons and dresses of those personages while living." At the beginning of the present century the figures were placed in the little chantry over Abbot Islip's Chapel, and were shown on the payment of a fee, and to attract visitors two other figures were added. An old guide-book to the Abbey (1783) draws attention to the new figure of the Earl of Chatham in his parliamentary robes, "lately introduced at considerable expense." The fee for seeing the figures was raised from one penny to sixpence on the introduction of this figure, the money going to eke out the scanty salaries of the minor canons. The last figure added was that of Nelson, and under the following circumstances: the funeral of the great admiral, and the exhibition of his funeral car at St. Paul's, drew so many people there, that as a counter attraction a wax figure dressed in his clothes was made and placed among the royal wax-works at the Abbey, with the result that the crowds returned to Westminster. The very success, however, of this move defeated its object, the authorities of the church were severely criticised for maintaining an exhibition of wax-works within the sacred precincts of the Abbey, and as a result the room containing the effigies was closed to the public for many years, and these curious relics could be seen only by a special order from the Dean. Now, however, a "magic sixpence" will again obtain admission to the audience room of dead and gone sovereigns. But they have been so long shut up that their existence is almost forgotten by the public, and few, in proportion to the crowds that visit the Abbey, find their way into the little dimly-lighted room over the ancient chapel of Abbot Islip. This small room is lined with glass cases, two more stand in the centre, and in them, gorgeously attired,

are the eleven figures which remain in good preservation. In point of time the oldest is that of Elizabeth, but her effigy was so freely restored by the Chapter in 1760 that very little of the original dress or figure remains, but the weird figure of an unlovely old woman is probably a good likeness of the queen ; so that in fact the oldest is that of Charles II. dressed in the magnificent robes of the Garter, trimmed with old point lace which would make the fortune of a collector. The ghastly face taken from a death-mask is considered the best existing likeness of the king. This figure stood for two centuries over the monarch's grave in Henry VII.'s Chapel, and was his only monument. William and Mary occupy one case ; he stands on a stool to render him more nearly equal in height to his more dignified looking queen. "Little William," as our guide called him, shows in his face his character, thus given by an early writer : "The opposition he constantly met with made him hasty, peevish, and fretful." (Roberts.) Mary's face was made from a cast after death ; she wears a brocade and velvet dress covered with paste jewels. Near by is Anne's "kindly pale face and homely form ;" her effigy is the only one seated, on account of its great size, and was so carried at her funeral. In a corner is the effigy, or rather the armor, of General Monk, which stood for two hundred years by his tomb. Before the figures were placed in their present position his cap was always used by the poorly paid guides to solicit donations from visitors. A Guide to the Abbey (1761) tells us that "this cap is generally made use of to receive your bounty, the salary of the Conductor being but small ; few go away without putting something in it." The "Ingoldsby Legends" also allude to this in "a fragment on the Abbey :"—

I thought on Naseby, Marston Moore, and Worcester's crowning fight,  
When on mine ears there fell a sound it filled me with affright,  
As thus in low, unearthly tones, I heard a voice begin :  
'This here's the cap of Gen'ral Monk, Sir, please put summat in.'

The Duchess of Buckinghamshire's effigy stands magnificently dressed in the splendid brocaded gown she wore at the coronation of George II., just as for many years it stood by the great tomb of her husband ; with her is her little son (who died at the age of three) quaintly clothed in a long red coat reaching to his heels. Next her is the beautiful Mary, Duchess of Richmond, known as "la belle Stuart," her figure dressed "in the very robes her Grace wore at the coronation of Queen Anne." She is said to have sat for the figure of Britannia on the coins issued in 1665. Her faithful parrot, who lived with her for upwards of forty years and who died of grief a few days after the death of his mistress, occupies a perch in the same case, and enjoys the privilege of a resting-place in Westminster

Abbey, the only one of his race so honored. The recumbent figure of the last Duke of Buckinghamshire occupies a glass case in the centre of the room. He died at Rome at the age of nineteen. "His body was brought to England, and on the 31st of January, 1736, had a most magnificent funeral ; in which this effigy lay upon the coffin and was borne in an open chariot (Roberts). This was the last effigy carried in a funeral procession ; terminating a curious chapter in English folk-lore.

Horace Walpole, who frequently visited the " Ragged Regiment " in Westminster Abbey, and mentions several times in his Diary that he took parties of friends to see the royal effigies, records that he found the relics of a similar funeral custom in France. He relates that on a visit to St. Denis he was shown the battered and tattered remains of the wax figures formerly borne in state at royal funerals, and particularly mentions the effigy of Louis XIV., whose face, he says, was so seamed and wrinkled by age, that it was with difficulty that the mask could be taken. No trace of these figures survived the Revolution, when everything connected with the hated name of royalty was ruthlessly destroyed by the unreasoning mob, so that the few mouldering figures crowded together in the dimly-lighted room over the old chapel of Abbot Islip are the only relics which to-day exist of an ancient and most curious funeral custom.

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